

ANNOTATIONS AND DOMAIN ANALYSIS OF POLYKETIDE SYNTHASE GENES IN FUNGAL WHEAT PATHOGEN, *MYCOSPHAERELLA GRAMINICOLA*

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Article history

Received

18 September 2015

Received in revised form

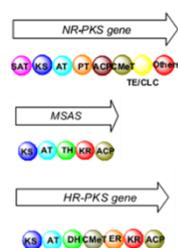
29 September 2015

Accepted

15 October 2015

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Graphical abstract



Classification of PKS based on their structural architecture

Abstract

Mycosphaerella graminicola is an important pathogenic fungus of the wheat that causes *Septoria tritici* blotch. The genome of *M. graminicola* has been sequenced and each domain of all polyketide synthase enzymes (PKS) was analysed and compared with known sequences from NCBI database. NCBI Basic Local Alignment Search Tool (BLAST) analysis and alignment using Vector NTi software suggested that *M. graminicola* has 10 PKS and 1 PKS-NRPS (nonribosomal peptide synthetase) hybrid, which could be involved in pathogenicity. Out of the 10 polyketide synthase genes, two are non-reducing PKS (NRPKS) and eight are annotated as highly reducing PKS (HRPKS). The NRPKS was labelled as MgPKS1 and MgPKS9. The HR PKS were labelled as MgPKS2, MgPKS3, MgPKS4, MgPKS5, MgPKS6, MgPKS7, and MgPKS8. The PKS-NRPS also have a highly reducing PKS as part of the hybrid

Keywords: *Mycosphaerella graminicola*, *Septoria* leaf blotch, polyketide, polyketide synthase, polyketide-nonribosomal peptide synthetase

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mycosphaerella graminicola strain IPO323 was fully sequenced by the Joint Genome Institute of the United States Department of Energy (JGI) [1]. *Mycosphaerella* is under the class Dothideomycete, and was suggested to be a model species by the JGI. One outstanding feature of *Mycosphaerella* is that this fungus has a unique mechanism of infection compared with most sequenced fungi [2]. Instead of penetrating the host directly like *Magnaporthe grisea*,

[3] *M. graminicola* infects via leaf stomata, suggesting no need of cell wall degrading enzymes. After the initial infection, the host does not show any symptoms of infection for 8 – 10 days despite the presence of a large quantity of fungal tissue. Under the right conditions, the mesophyll cells can suddenly undergo rapid collapse, resulting in chlorosis and necrosis. This collapse occurs without the presence of mycelium, probably due to production of soluble phytotoxins during the wheat-fungal interaction [4]. Thus, the use of bioinformatics analysis can be very useful in

prediction of pathogenesis and the production of phytotoxins in fungi. Phytotoxins usually derived from secondary metabolites like polyketides, which are well known to be potent phytotoxins in other *Mycosphaerella* species [5]. One example is juglone, a polyketide type phytotoxin which is produced by *Mycosphaerella fijiensis*. Thus, it is feasible that *M. graminicola* produced phytotoxins derived from polyketide biosynthetic pathway.

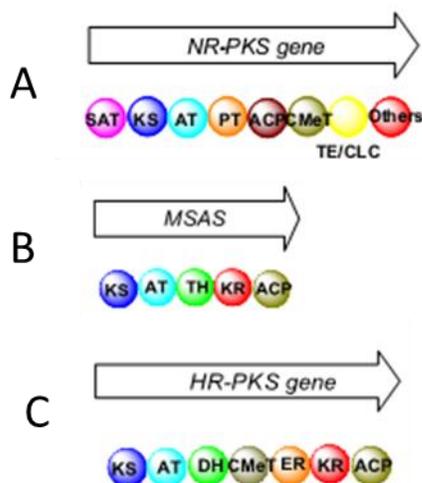


Figure 1 Classification of PKS based on their structural architecture, A = non-reducing PKS; B = partially-reducing PKS; C = highly-reducing PKS

Polyketide biosynthesis and the diverse structures of the polyketides produced depend on the polyketide synthase (PKS) enzymes. Each catalytic domain is linked together and each has specific functions. Examples of polyketides are the simple polyketide orsellinic acid and the highly complex T-toxin [6]. There are three main types of polyketides based on annotations and protein structures: type I, type II and type III. This study focused on Type I polyketide which consist of very large multifunctional proteins with covalently linked catalytic domains [7].

Type I PKS divided into two subtypes; modular and iterative systems [7]. Type I modular PKS are commonly found in bacteria and are usually very large enzymes. Type I iterative PKS are mostly found in fungi, and the enzymes are used repeatedly as needed [7]. The type I iterative PKS have been divided into three groups, based on the enzymatic domains that are present in the synthase which has different catalytic activities: non-reducing (NR), partially-reducing (PR) and highly-reducing (HR) enzymes [7], (Figure 1).

Non reducing PKS (NR-PKS) produce aromatic compounds, for example orsellinic acid, produced by the *Aspergillus* and *Penicillium* family and norsolorinic acid from *Aspergillus parasiticus* [8]. The general domain architecture of NR-PKS genes in fungi usually consists of a starter-unit ACP-transacylase (SAT), β -ketoacylsynthase (KS), acyltransferase (AT), product template (PT), acyl carrier protein (ACP) and

thiolesterase/cyclases (TE/CLC) [9, 10]. Some NR-PKS appear to terminate after ACP, others contain methyltransferases and reductases [11].

Partially reducing PKS (PR-PKS) produce partial reduced compounds [12]. *Penicillium patulum* has MSAS protein that produces 6-methylsalicylic acid (6-MSA) and is the precursor of the mycotoxin patulin [13]. Genes that have been identified to encode MSAS are atX from *Aspergillus terreus* [14], pks2 from *Glarea lozoyensis* [12], 6msas from *Byssachlamys nivea* and aomsas from *Aspergillus westerdijkiae* [15]. The domain architecture of the PR PKS starts with the N-terminal KS, AT, thiolester hydrolase (TH), KR and ACP domains [12, 13].

The HR-PKS can control the formation of complex and highly reduced compounds like lovastatin, T-toxin, fumonisin B1, alternapyrone and squalestatin [16]. The domain structure of the HR-PKS are as follows; KS, AT, DH, C-MeT, ER, KR, ACP.

This study annotates and predicts the type of polyketides might be produced by polyketide synthase genes found in *Mycosphaerella graminicola*.

2.0 EXPERIMENTAL

All the PKS genes were translated into proteins *in silico*, and then aligned using the Vector NTi software [17]. The presence of introns were determined using Softberry tools [18], because up to now, there is no cDNA of a complete *M. graminicola* PKS gene. Multiple sequence alignments of amino acid sequences of PKS from *M. graminicola* and known PKS were conducted using Vector NTi according to similarity and homology, and the result was simplified by a phylogenetic tree. The domain boundaries of each PKS gene were determined by comparative analysis of the amino acid sequence with known and characterised PKS genes which were taken from the NCBI database, Broad Institute Fungal Genome Initiative database and Joint Genome Institute database. The known PKS genes are as stated in Table 1.

Table 1 List of known PKS used in this study

Organism (Accession number)	Gene	Protein	Domain	Final product
<i>Aspergillus fumigatus</i> ACJ13039	<i>alb1</i>	AbIb1p	SAT-KS- AT-PT- ACP- ACP- CLC/TE	YWA1
<i>Aspergillus parasiticus</i> Q12053	<i>pksL1/AflC/pksA</i>	NSAS	SAT-KS- AT-PT- ACP- CLC/TE	afatoxin
<i>Acremonium strictum</i> CAN87161.2	<i>AsPKS</i>	MOS	SAT-KS- AT-PT- ACP- CMeT-R	xenovulene
<i>Monascus purpureus</i> BAD44749	<i>pksCT</i>	CitS	SAT-KS- AT-PT- ACP- CMeT-R	citrinin
<i>Aspergillus terreus</i> BAA20102.2	<i>atX</i>	MSAS	KS-AT- TH-KR- ACP	6-methyl salicylic acid
<i>Glarea lozoyensis</i> AAX35547.1	<i>pks2</i>	MSAS	KS-AT- TH-KR- ACP	6-methyl salicylic acid
<i>Fusarium hetero-Sporum</i> AAV66106	<i>eqiS</i>	EQS	KS-AT- DH- CMeT- (ER)-KR- ACP- NRPS	equisetin
<i>Aspergillus terreus</i> AAD39830	<i>lovB</i>	LNKS	KS-AT- DH- CMeT- (ER)-KR- ACP-C	lovastatin
<i>Aspergillus terreus</i> AAD39830	<i>lovF</i>	LDKS	KS-AT- DH- CMeT- ER-KR- ACP	lovastatin
<i>Beauveria bassiana</i> CAL69597	<i>ORF4</i>	TENS	KS-AT- DH- CMeT- (ER)-KR- ACP- NRPS	tenellin
<i>Phoma</i> sp. AAO62426.1	<i>PhPKS1</i>	SQTKS	KS- AT-DH- CMeT- ER-KR- ACP	squale- statin

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overall Analysis

Each PKS from *M. graminicola* was first compared with known PKS genes by multiple sequence alignment analysis and from the results, a phylogenetic tree was generated (Figure 2). The known PKS genes covered all three classes of fungal PKS: the non-reducing PKS (NR-PKS), partially-reducing PKS (PR-PKS) and highly-reducing PKS (HR-PKS). Each of these classes has characteristic domain arrangement and was grouped accordingly. Known domains such as β -ketosynthase, ACP, AT, KR, DH and ER domains are available in NCBI database, but domains such as SAT, PT and TH need to be examined manually using Vector NTi software. The clusters have grouped both known PKS and PKS from *M. graminicola* into roughly three groups: NR-PKS (yellow box), PR-PKS (blue box) and HR-PKS (pink box). Each of these classes has characteristic domain arrangement and was grouped accordingly. The sequences of known domains such as β -ketosynthase, ACP, AT, KR, DH and ER domains are available in NCBI database, but domains such as SAT, PT and TH need to be examined manually using Vector NTi software. Based on the grouping from Figure 2 and domain sequence pattern generated from NCBI and Vector NTi (data not shown), it was obvious that *M. graminicola* does not have any PR-PKS.

It can be proposed that MgPKS1 and MgPKS9 are most likely NR-PKS, because multiple sequence alignment showed highest homology towards NR-PKS, with annotation of SAT domain which is exclusive in NR-PKS. Figure 2 showed that these two PKS are grouped together along known NR-PKS such as AsPKS1 which encodes MOS for the production of 3-methylorcinaldehyde from *Acremonium strictum*.

Figure 2 also shows MgPKS1 protein being grouped with PKS genes which encode for THNS proteins such as PKS1 from *Nodulisporium* sp., pks1 from *Colletotrichum lagenarium* and WdPKS1 from *Wangiella dermatitis*. This is also supported by multiple sequence alignment of the PT domain (details in domain analysis discussion), which was suggested to be involved in chain length mechanism [7].

MgPKS9 is grouped with tetraketide producing proteins such as MOS from *Acremonium strictum* which produces 3-methylorcinaldehyde [19] and CitS from *Monascus purpureus* which is involved in the production citrinin as the final product. Like MgPKS1, this data is supported by multiple sequence alignment of the PT domain (data not shown). MgPKS9 are most similar to AfoE from *Aspergillus nidulans* that involves in the production of a non reduced polyketide, asperfuranone [20].

MgPKS10 and MgPKSNRPS1 are all grouped together with known PKS with inactive ER such as ACE1 from *Magnaporthe grisea*, LNKS from *Aspergillus terreus* and TENS from *Beauveria bassiana* [20]. Multiple sequence alignment and domain analysis of the ER domain from both MgPKS10 and MgPKSNRPS1 supported this result (data not shown).

The rest of the PKS from *M. graminicola* were grouped in the HR-PKS class, along with some known HR-PKS such as lovastatin diketide synthase (LDKS) and lovastatin nanoketide synthase (LNKS) from *Aspergillus terreus* (Figure 2) and supported by the multiple sequence alignment analysis (data not shown).

3.2 Domain Analysis

This report focused on the domain analysis of only 2 PKS, which is MgPKS1 (as NRPKS representative) and MgPKS2 (as HRPKS representative). Three domains that are exclusive in NRPKS are SAT, PT and TE/CLC domains. The conserved catalytic sites of SAT are the FGDQ(S/T), the GXCXG sequence, and the conserved histidine residue (Table 2) [21]. The conserved catalytic site of the PT domain has the GHXVXGX₅P₅ motifs, while the TE/CLC domain has the GX SXG conserved motifs [22, 23].

In both PKS, analysis of the domain sequences using multiple sequence alignment analysis showed the highly conserved AT, KS and ACP domains, all with intact active sites. These domains are crucial for the transfer of acyl and condensation reaction of the growing ketide chain [7]. Mutations of the catalytic residue GPX₅TACSX (KS domain), GHSXG (AT domain) and XGXDSL (ACP domain) usually mean that the enzyme is inactive. Like some NRPKS, MgPKS1 has two ACP domains, similar to THNS from *Wangiella dermatitidis* that produces T4HN as well as *Aspergillus fumigatus* Ablb1p and *Aspergillus nidulans* WA that produce the compound YWA1. Both of the compounds are involved in melanin formation [22].

The PT domain analysis showed the GHXVXGX₅P₅ motifs, indicative of PT domain and the expected ACP motifs XGXDSL were present in both domains (Table 1). It was proposed that PT domain are involved in the

chain length mechanism [7], so the PT sequence of the translated MgPKS1 was aligned with known PT domains: tetrahydroxynaphthalene (THNS) from *Colletotrichum lagenarium*, a pentaketide; CitS, from *Monascus purpureus* and ZS-B, both which are tetraketides and NSAS (octaketide). Multiple alignment analysis showed that MgPKS1 is grouped with THNS from *C. lagenarium*, suggesting that MgPKS1 encodes for a pentaketide, consistent with its possible role in melanin biosynthesis. The TE/CLC domain of MgPKS1 has all the required active site residues (Table 2), [23].

MgPKS2, being a highly reducing enzyme, has all the reducing enzymes motifs: KR, DH and ER. There is a conserved domain of KR, with the expected SX₁₂YX₃(K/N) motifs.

Domain analysis of the ER sequence of MgPKS2 suggested that the ER domain is inactive due to mutations at the catalytic site, so that instead of the GXGX₂(G/A)X₃(G/A) motifs, the gene has a SLGQALVTIA motif (Table 2). The mutation of glycine to serine is similar to the PKSf gene in *Alternaria solani* [23]. Some PKS genes that have an inactive ER have a nearby trans-ER domain in the gene cluster, for example tenC in the production of tenellin and lovC in the production of lovastatin [20, 24]. However, MgPKS2 appears to have no nearby trans-ER. This suggests that the product produced by MgPKS2 protein would be absent of reduction of the double bonds, similar with aslanipyron produced by PKSf and Fusarin C from *Gibberella moniliformis* [23, 25].

MgPKS2 also has a C-MeT domain, with a KVLEIGAGTA motif, but with a noticeable mutation at the glycine site which is replaced by alanine, suggesting that the methylation domain might not be functional (Table 2).

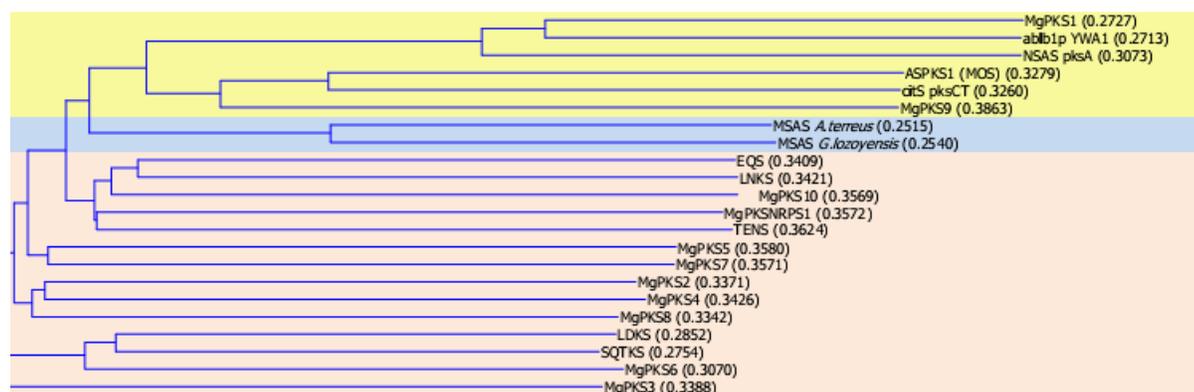


Figure 2 Phylogenetic tree of all PKS genes from *M. graminicola* compared with some known PKS genes. The yellow box indicates NR-PKS class, the blue box indicates PR-PKS class and the pink box indicates the HR-PKS class

Table 2 The conserved sequence of each catalytic domain in selected PKS from *M. graminicola*. MgPKS1 represents Non-Reducing PKS and MgPKS2 represents Highly Reducing PKS

Domain	Site description	Consensus	PKS Sequence	PKS
SAT	Active site glutamine	FGDQ(S/T)	6-FQDQT-12	MgPKS1
	Active site serine	GXCXG	112-GLCTG-118	
	Active site histidine	XHX	241-H-243	
KS	Active site cysteine	GPX ₅ TACSX	531-GPSYSIDTACSS-544	MgPKS1
			174-GPSMTLDTACSS-188	MgPKS2
AT	Active site serine	GHSXG	985-GHSLG-991	MgPKS1
			672-GHSSG-678	MgPKS2
DH	Dehydratase active site	HX ₃ GX ₄ P	1006-HVVRGSDVFP-1017	MgPKS2
C-MeT	SAM binding motif	(K/R)(I/V)(I/L)EIG(A/G)GTG	1486-KVLEIGAGTA-1497	MgPKS2
ER	NAD(P)H binding motif	GXGX ₂ (G/A)X ₃ (G/A)	2021-SLGQALVTIA-2032	MgPKS2
KR	Active site	SX ₁₂ YX ₃ (K/N)	2362-SIAGLIGSPGQSNYSSGN-2381	MgPKS2
			1319-GHVMNNAALCPS-1332	
PT	Conserved histidine	GHXVXGX5P ₅	1319-GHVMNNAALCPS-1332	MgPKS1
ACP	Phosphopantetheine attachment site	XGXDSL	1699-GVDSL-1705	MgPKS1
			1834-GMDSL-1840	MgPKS2
			2554-YGVDSL-2561	
TE/CLC	Active site serine, Histidine residue, Asp residue	GXSXG, XHX, XDX	1999-GWSQG-2005, 2067-H-2069, 2150-H-2152, 2028-D-2030	MgPKS1

4.0 CONCLUSION

Annotations of the PKS genes of *M. graminicola* gave two putative NR-PKS genes, eight putative HR-PKS and one truncated PKS-NRPS hybrid. The detail analysis of these genes can be used as a guide for heterologous expression studies.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the Ministry of Education Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and grant number GGPM-2013-033 for funding.

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